

Public Hearing Summary
Department of General Administration
Transfer of Property for Construction of Biogas Facility

On June 9, 2005, the State Department of General Administration held a public hearing in Monroe, Washington to accept testimony on the legislatively mandated (Laws of 2004, Chapter 277, Section 914) transfer of 277 acres of state-owned land in Snohomish County to the Tulalip Tribe. This property is commonly known as the "Monroe Honor Farm" and is owned by the State of Washington and managed by the Department of Corrections.

The law requires that this property be transferred to a "federally recognized tribe within Snohomish County for construction and operation of a biogas facility, related agricultural-based businesses, and activities designed to promote salmon restoration and sustainability of area dairy farms." The law also requires that General Administration manage the land transfer.

Summary of Comments and Agency Responses (if applicable):

In addition to the public hearing, General Administration took public comments from May 23, 2005 through June 16, 2005. Three comments (one written and two oral) were received at the hearing, and two additional written comments were received subsequent to the hearing. The following summarizes those comments:

Sally Hintz, from Senator Maria Cantwell's office, in oral testimony, was supportive of this transfer and commented that this project would be a model program that could promote more biogas facilities and requested an expedited transfer of the property.

(GA Response) The transfer of the Property will occur on or before October 15, in accordance with the legislation.

John McCoy, Representative for the 38th District, in oral testimony, expressed support for this project and commented about the common community goal of healthy salmon, which is a natural result of clean water. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining partnerships throughout the agricultural community.

Daniel Reddick, 15216 212th Street SE, Monroe, in written testimony, expressed several concerns regarding this transfer. His first concern was regarding the transfer to the tribe while there were other groups interested in purchasing the property. His second concern was regarding the head count restrictions and the possibility of putting too many cattle on the property, which would have a detrimental effect on sustainable agriculture. His final concern was that the property may, in the future, be used for something other than the sustainable agriculture.

(GA Response) The decision to transfer the property to the Tribe was made by the Legislature. The conveyance document that transfers the property will have use restrictions that are consistent with the legislation. If the property is not used for a Biogas facility and related uses outlined in the legislation, it will revert back to the State.

John Gragg, 22601 SR2, Monroe, written testimony. Mr. Gragg is the executive director of the Hope Ranch, which is a non-profit organization that benefits foster children. He was interested in acquiring a portion of the property for this purpose. He expressed concern that the state statutes were not followed in the disposition of this property and was concerned that the Tribe was not fully complying with the provisions in the legislation.

(GA Response) The legislation provided specific Statutory Authority for the transfer of this property. General Administration will review compliance with the legislation prior to transferring the property.

Larry Hancock, 16820 Highbridge Road, Monroe, in written testimony, provided five comments regarding this transfer. (1) He was unable to find the location of the hearing and felt that it was not a good location choice. (2) He did not feel that the value of a biogas facility warranted the donation of this property. (3) He suggested that other uses for the property were not thoughtfully considered. (4) He raised concerns regarding infrastructure, increased traffic, and noise level. (5) He voiced concern about the donation of property given the current economic scenario.

(GA Response)

- (1) The hearing was scheduled at the location chosen by the Department of Corrections and was advertised locally with contact phone numbers for more information, including directions to the site of the hearing.*
- (2) and (3) The 2004 Legislature found that the benefit of the biogas facility warranted the transfer of the property.*
- (4) The construction permits will be under the jurisdiction of Snohomish County and concerns regarding impacts on the local community should be addressed to Snohomish County.*
- (5) The 2004 Legislature found that the proposed use of the property would be of beneficial economic value to the surrounding community.*

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